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AUTHOR Cox, Marlene
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ABSTRACT

This Tasmanian handbook for teachers describes a handwriting program that helps children develop a technique that enables them to easily produce a legible and fluent personal handwriting style. An initial overview of the program is followed by sections that focus on activities for development of handwriting skills, the process of planning the program, handwriting in the language arts program, and handwriting across the curriculum. A glossary is provided. (28 references) (RH)

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BASIC HANDWRITING

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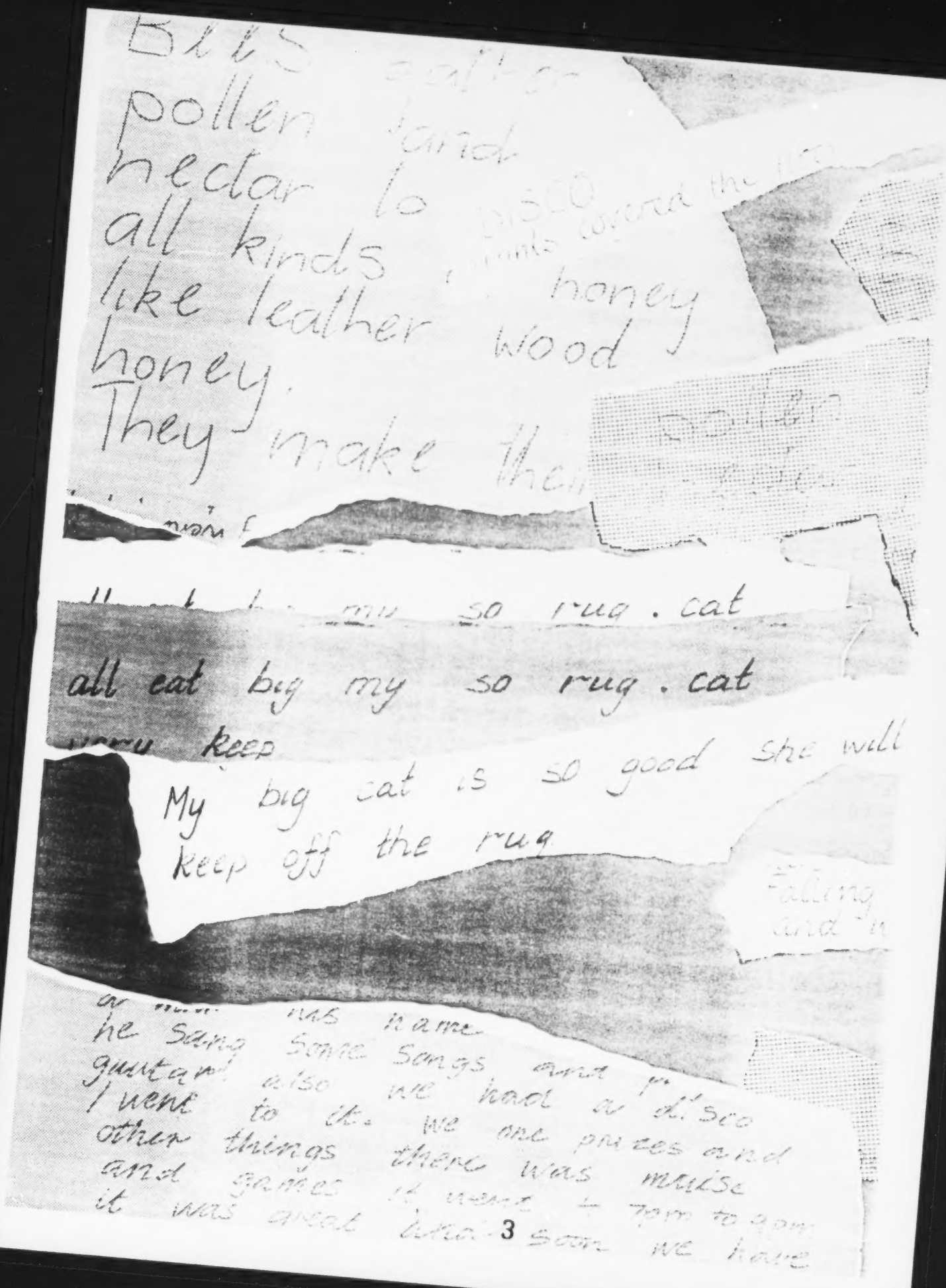
Bees
pollen
nectar
all kinds
like leather
honey.
They make
honey
wood
so rug . cat
all cat big my so rug . cat
keep
My big cat is so good she will
keep off the rug
he sang some songs and
guitar also we had a disco
I went to the we ate prizes and
other things there was music
and games it went 4 pm to 9 pm
it was great later soon we have

BASIC HANDWRITING

Marlene Cox

Curriculum Project Officer

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TASMANIA AUSTRALIA

Foreword

This handbook has been prepared in response to requests from many teachers who are seeking advice on the teaching of handwriting.

They have recognised that teaching handwriting is a task that takes time, skill, and a commitment to quality in presentation.

The handbook is based on research in child development and close observation of children as writers. The style of handwriting that is suggested is very similar to the styles that are being adopted in other states.

The interest and enthusiasm that trial teachers have shown makes me confident that the handbook will prove to be a valuable and very practical guide to teaching in all schools.

I commend it to you.

K.I. Axton
Director General
of Education

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to the many teachers and children who have contributed to this handbook by way of discussions, samples, encouragement and support.

Special thanks to G.A. Holden, who introduced the style and inspired this work; Bryan Pearce, staff and children of Lindisfarne North Primary School; C. Fahey; W. Brewer; M. Blomhoff; P. Braithwaite; R. Colbourne; and R. Scharaschkin.

Marlene Cox

Marlene Cox
Project Officer
Development and Evaluation Section
57 Brisbane Street
Hobart
Tasmania
Australia

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1 The handwriting program

AIMS OF THE PROGRAM

The overall aim of the handwriting program is to guide children to develop a handwriting technique which enables them to easily produce a legible and fluent personal style.

The handwriting program should provide the following elements:

- instruction, both formal and informal, in technique and style;
- opportunities for children to develop the necessary concepts and abilities that will enable them to reproduce the style with confidence;
- experiences that will enable children to come to an understanding of the value and importance of handwriting as an effective tool for communication.
- opportunities for children to develop the ability to evaluate and monitor their handwriting progress.

The formalities and conventions in writing, such as punctuation, spelling, grammar and handwriting, are means to effective written communication. They are not an end in themselves.

In recording their ideas, thoughts and feelings, children need a relaxed technique and style of handwriting that they can produce with confidence and sustain for increasingly longer periods of time. By practising the technique and using appropriate materials, developing writers gain the confidence and ability to produce a legible style that will help them to communicate through writing. Children should be encouraged to develop a personal style that is both pleasing to themselves and easily read by others.

Throughout history, the process of communication through handwriting has altered according to the changing needs, values and technology of society. Modern handwriting styles have been developed to provide children with a means for quick and effective communication. They are simplified styles of handwriting based on children's early writing behaviour which indicates that children's natural movements are oval shaped and sloped.

Children are taught to form letters using the oval shape. Slope generally develops through increased confidence and fluency but is strongly influenced by the models provided by teachers.

The following list highlights the knowledge, attitudes and abilities children can develop through the handwriting program:

Knowledge

Children should become aware that:

- print conveys a message;
- handwriting is a tool used in the writing process;
- the purpose and audience for writing influence style and layout used;
- pen lifts have specific functions;
- sound techniques are necessary in developing a fluent, legible individual style.

Attitudes

Children should develop:

- a positive attitude towards themselves and their handwriting;
- the desire to experiment in order to develop a personal style;
- a willingness to accept responsibility for the quality of their written material.

Abilities

Children should develop:

- hand-eye co-ordination;
- fine motor control;
- correct letter shapes using the suggested sequence of movements;
- consistent size, slope, spacing, proportion and alignment of letters;
- appropriate use of pen lifts;
- relaxed technique;
- ability to produce handwriting at speed;
- strategies to evaluate their own technique and style.

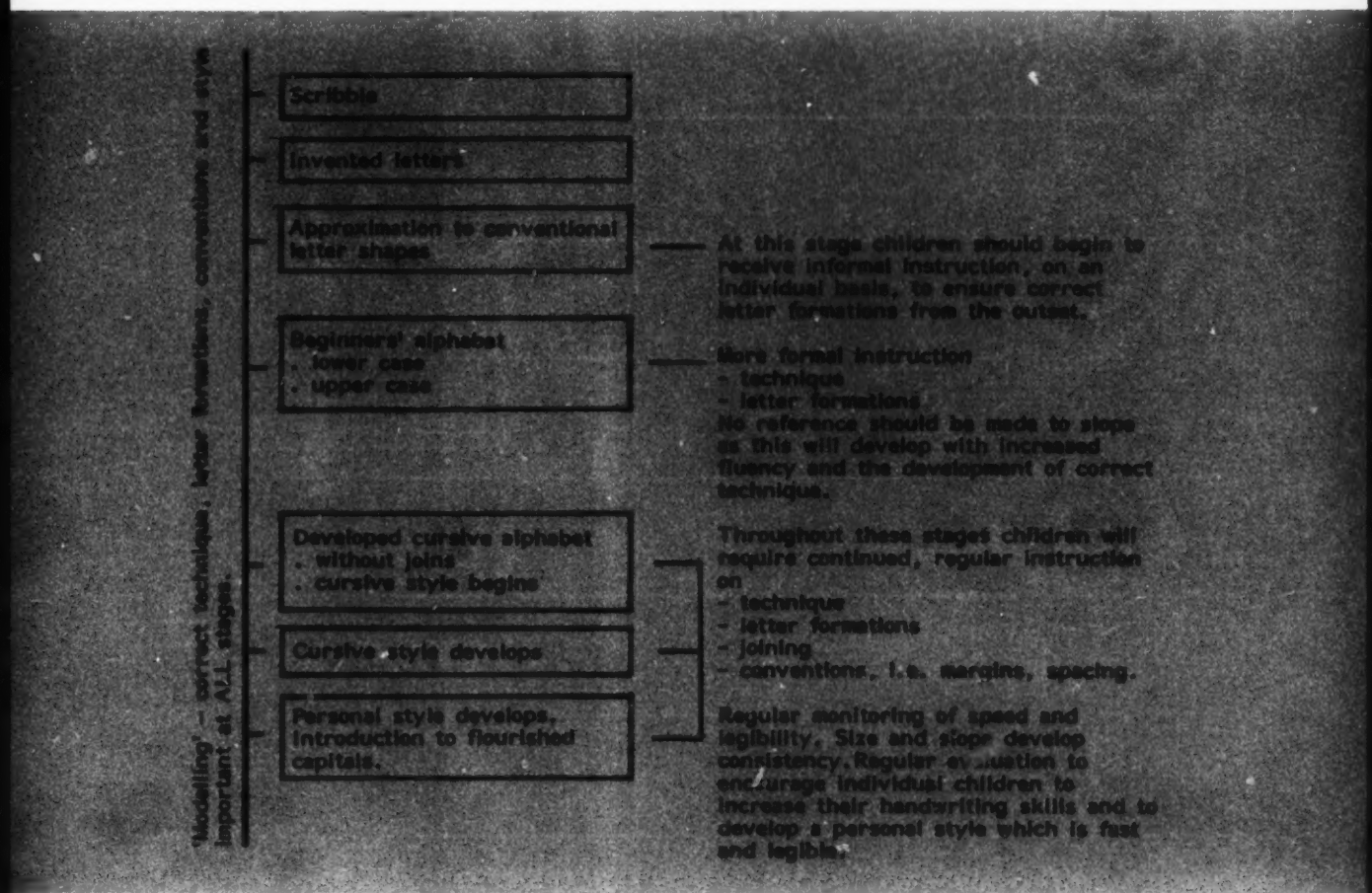
The opportunities for handwriting development exist across the curriculum as part of every lesson, every day. The handwriting process should be developed and refined throughout primary and secondary school and in adulthood.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

The following stages of development will be followed by most children. These stages are certainly not definitive, as children will develop at an individual rate from the beginners' stage through to the cursive stage, and beyond to the development of a personal style. However, most children will progress through the following stages. *All* stages require *systematic* and *regular* instruction which should be based on the needs of the child.

Children vary widely in their rate of general progress, so, at any one time and in any one class group, their development may span several broad stages.

Suggested stages of development


'Modelling' - correct technique, letter formations, conventions and style important at ALL stages.
Scribble
Invented letters
Approximation to conventional letter shapes
Beginners' alphabet
. lower case
. upper case
Developed cursive alphabet
. without joins
. cursive style begins
Cursive style develops
Personal style develops. Introduction to flourished capitals.
At this stage children should begin to receive informal instruction, on an individual basis, to ensure correct letter formations from the outset.
More formal instruction
- technique
- letter formations
No reference should be made to slope as this will develop with increased fluency and the development of correct technique.
Throughout these stages children will require continued, regular instruction on
- technique
- letter formations
- joining
- conventions, i.e. margins, spacing.
Regular monitoring of speed and legibility. Size and slope develop consistency. Regular evaluation to encourage individual children to increase their handwriting skills and to develop a personal style which is fast and legible.

No attempt has been made to relate these stages to any grade level, as development varies with individual differences.

It is important that the teaching of handwriting is undertaken when any activity that involves handwriting is being undertaken. However on occasions children will need instruction in and practice of particular handwriting skills.

2 Activities for developing handwriting skills

The activities suggested in this section represent a small sample of the possible activities and resources that can be used to complement the classroom handwriting program.

Activities for developing manipulative skills

ACTIVITY	SKILL	CONCEPT
finger-painting	motor control hand/eye co-ordination	left, right, top, bottom
painting with a brush	hand/eye co-ordination motor control instrument hold	oval, slope, up, down, over, above, under, in, out
drawing - pencil - felt pen - crayon - chalk	hand/eye co-ordination muscular control fine motor movement instrument hold	alignment proportion spatial relationships
measuring and pouring water and sand	fine motor control	
screwing and unscrewing	fine motor control	size, shape direction of rotation
modelling in sand, clay, play-dough	fine motor control manipulative skill	under, over, above, beside
tearing and folding paper	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination	in, out, along, straight, beginning, end
block-building	fine motor control	on top of, high, low, beside, above

constructing toys	hand/eye co-ordination manipulative skills perceptual discrimination	spatial relationships
pasting	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination	spatial relationships
cutting	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination	sharp, blunt, thick, thin
pattern-making	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination instrument hold	sequence (between, before, after, next), oval, slope, straight, up, down, left, right, top, bottom
mazes	hand/eye co-ordination	start, finish, direction
jigsaws	visual memory	spatial relationships
sorting - objects - shapes	perceptual discrimination	big, little, as large as, the same as, oval
matching - objects - shapes - pictures - words - letters	perceptual discrimination	one-to-one relationships
finding differences - objects - pictures - shapes - words - letters	perceptual discrimination	verbal expression of perceived differences
threading	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination	in, on, next, before, after, size
sewing, lacing, buttoning, buckling, tying laces	fine motor control hand/eye co-ordination	sequence in, out, bottom, through, next, after

TECHNIQUE

The mastery of technique is essential if the child is to acquire a fluent, legible handwriting style.

From the outset particular attention must be given to:

- sitting position
- pen/pencil hold
- hand and arm movements

so that faulty habits that will hinder the child's progress do not develop.

Sitting position

Good posture should be encouraged in all activities.

- The body should lean forward slightly without touching the desk or table.
- The body should not lean sideways or be twisted.
- The head should not be too near the paper.
- The feet should be touching the floor.
- The elbows should be near the edge of the desk.
- The arms should spread away from the body.
- A relaxed, comfortable position is necessary to allow the hand and arm to move freely.

If children are to maintain correct posture, they should have desks or tables that suit them.

Pen/pencil hold

- The pencil should be held lightly between the second finger and the thumb. The first finger should rest lightly on the pencil.
- The barrel of the pencil should rest against the knuckle at the base of the first finger, pointing outwards above the elbow.
- The pencil should be held about two centimetres from the point.
- The side of the forearm and the third and little fingers should lightly touch the paper.

The writing movement

- Correct sitting position and pencil hold should allow for relaxed hand and arm movements.
- The arm moves sideways to achieve the left-to-right progression across the page.
- Exercises involving writing in the air and 'finger writing' are helpful in practising whole-arm movements.

Relaxation

Relaxation is necessary to develop good technique. Relaxed muscles assist in developing rhythmic and fluent writing movements. Children should be taught some basic relaxation exercises such as:

- clenching and unclenching hands;
- drumming the fingers lightly on the desk;
- shaking the hands from the wrist;
- moving the hands in a circular motion from the wrist;
- reaching arms above the head.

Slope

The slope of handwriting can be produced by tilting the paper. Most children automatically adopt a paper tilt of approximately 20° - to the left for right-handers, and to the right for left-handers. This tilt will vary for some individual children.

Suggested methods for holding the pencil

BASIC HANDWRITING MOVEMENTS

Legible, fluent handwriting uses handwriting movements which are simple, repetitive and automatic.

Basic handwriting movements are used firstly to produce the letter shapes and then, as handwriting speed develops, to produce lines which conveniently join letters.

When handwriting is fluent and legible we use a repetitive downward movement in producing letter shapes as we travel left to right across the page. The repeated down stroke forms parallel letter shapes and, as speed develops, letters become joined by incidental upward joining strokes. The fingers have the major responsibility for this down stroke.

The overall left-to-right progression is mainly brought about by movement of the writing arm.

Fluent, legible handwriting is accomplished by integrating these movements into a continuous rhythm. The continuous rhythm of movement is achieved by the fingers, hand and arm working in conjunction.

PATTERN-MAKING

The development of basic handwriting movements, particularly the oval, parallel strokes and horizontal strokes, is essential if fluent, legible, automatic handwriting is to be achieved.

Attention to this aspect of handwriting is essential at all stages, but particularly in the early stages of development.

The fine and fluent motor control required for effective handwriting can be developed by practising patterns which contain the basic handwriting movements.

These handwriting movements need to be practised regularly. To make this practice more interesting for children, patterns may be developed using one stroke or a combination of strokes.

The usefulness of patterns is that they provide an opportunity to practise *basic handwriting movements* without the distraction of thinking about subject matter. Such patterns are not intended to be 'artistic'. They have a *specific purpose* in the development of handwriting skills.

PRELIMINARY WRITING PATTERNS

Writing patterns have been designed to help children to:

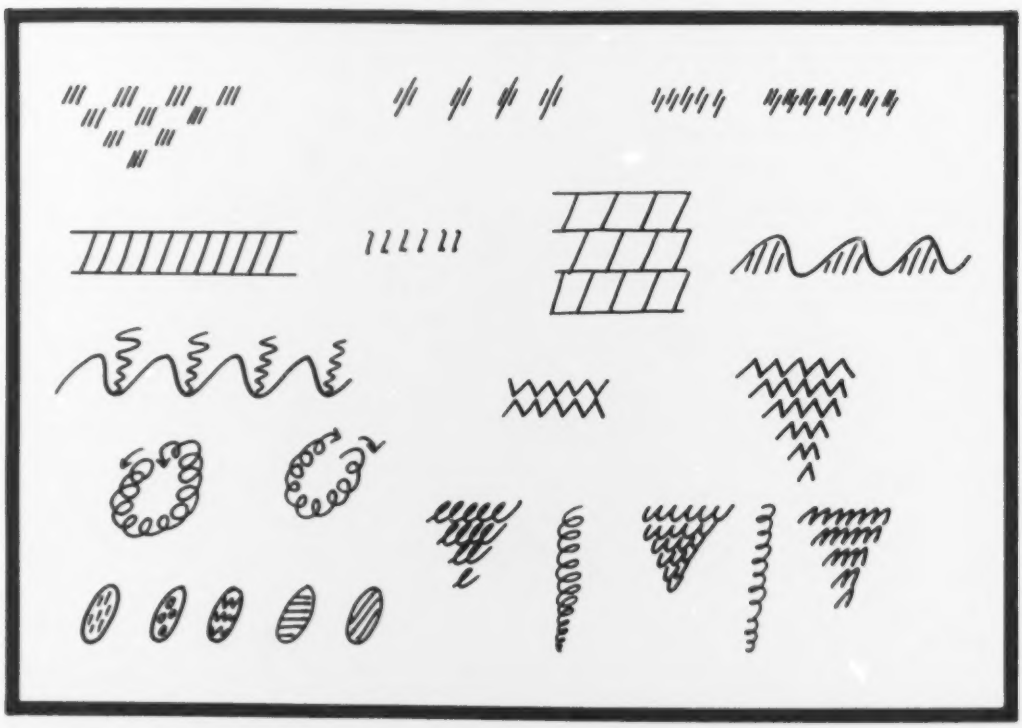
- gain control of the implement and develop 'eye-control' by co-ordinating hand and eye;
- learn directional sequences and movements (for example top to bottom, left to right, clockwise and anti-clockwise rotation);
- develop rhythmic movements.

Teachers should work with small groups of children or individuals so that the children can model the teacher's movements and be easily helped.

Children's efforts improve with encouragement, experience and practice.

Abundant drawing and writing experiences should be provided to foster the children's acquisition of the basic strokes.

The following exercises use the basic stroke patterns:



A child needs to have had plenty of opportunities to develop the following before instruction can begin:

- visual discrimination;
- visual memory;
- manipulative skills (hand/eye co-ordination, fine motor control, instrument hold).

VISUAL DISCRIMINATION

As the letters of the alphabet differ in shape to varying degrees (some are simply inverted or reversed), it is essential that a child is able to discriminate fine differences.

Suggested activities

- School/home-made games
- Matching games, e.g. Dominoes, 'Snap'
- Recognising the 'odd one out' in a sequence
- Finding hidden objects in pictures, environmental materials.

A wide range of ideas is available in commercial texts and fun pads available from supermarkets.

VISUAL MEMORY

A child needs to be able to remember a shape and then reproduce it from memory.

Suggested activities

- Memory games - objects are shown then covered - an attempt is made to recall the items
- Reproducing, after a brief exposure to the original, a sequence of
  - shapes
  - objects
  - letters
  - colours

Some suggestions for pattern-making to assist the development of pencil control.

Each pattern could be continued across a large sheet of newsprint until written confidently and fluently.

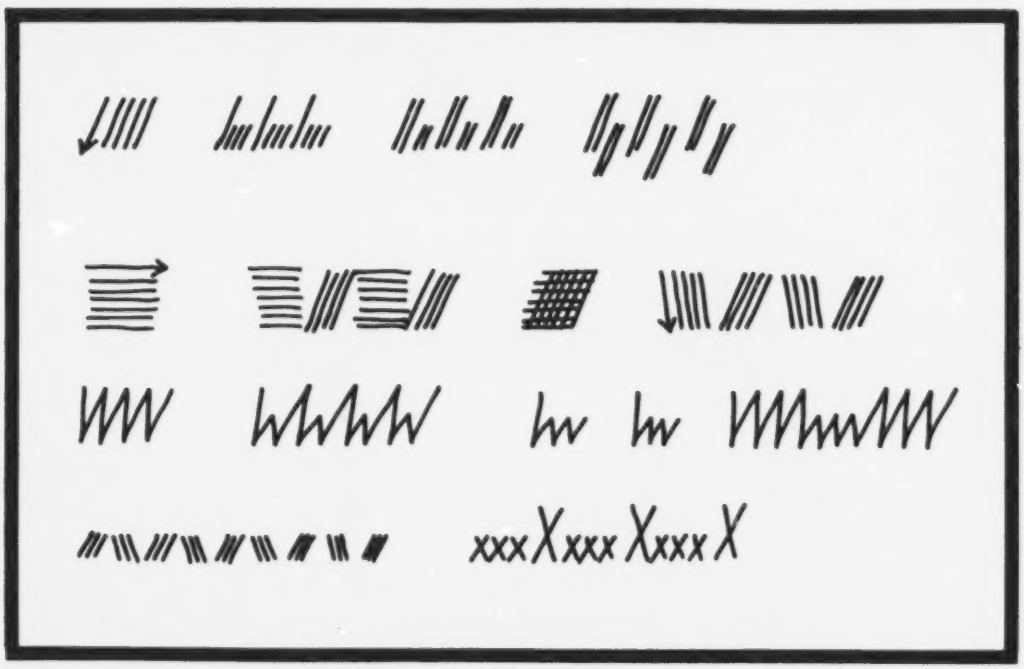
- Any combinations of exercises and letter shapes may be used.
- Books of 'Our Writing Patterns' could be made.

EXERCISES

These exercises can be employed usefully before or during other lessons to prepare children for fluent and relaxed writing, and to give the teacher opportunities to correct faulty posture and pencil hold.

Each exercise should be performed many times and children should endeavour to increase the speed and fluency of their pattern-making.

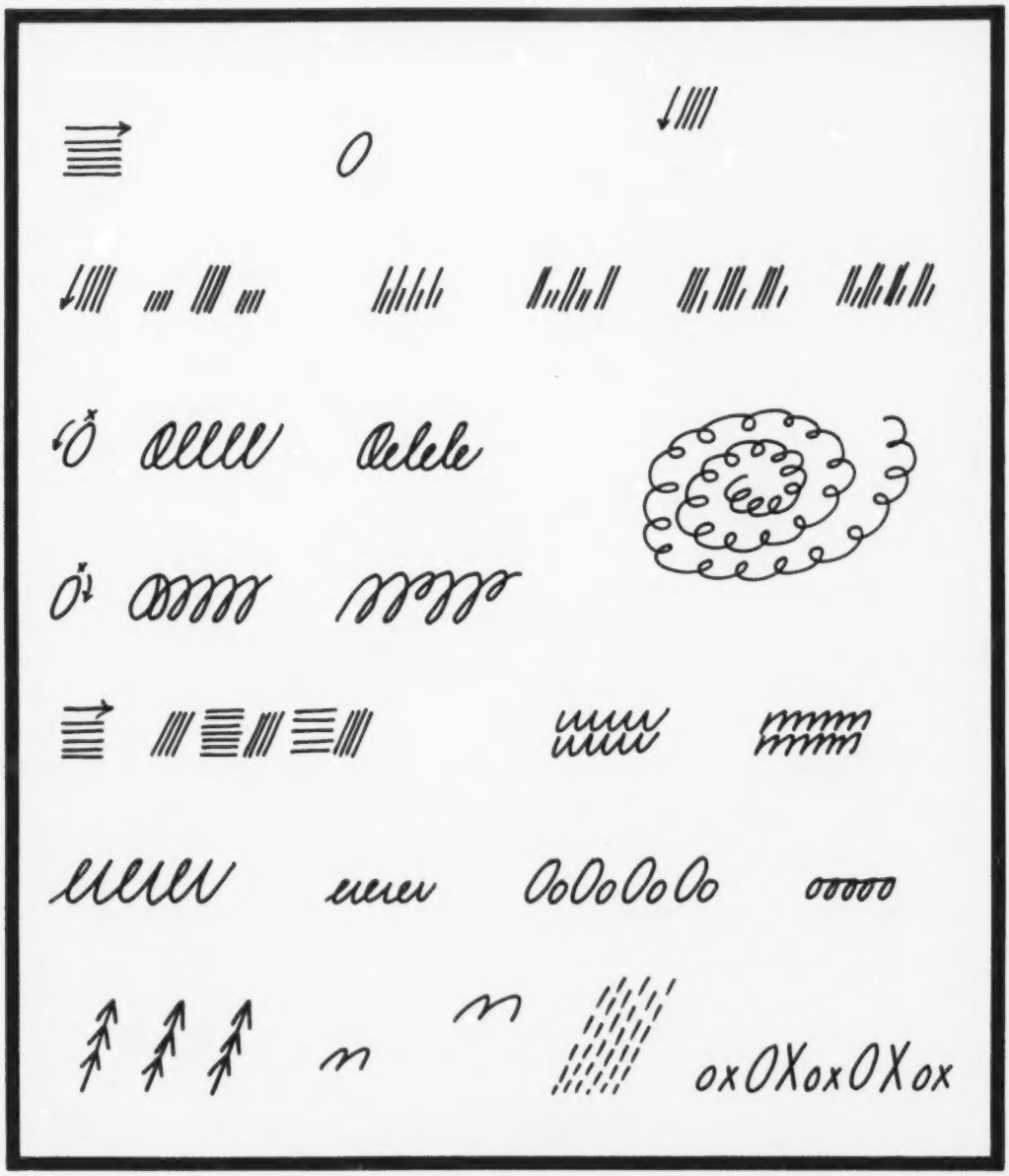
The exercises must not degenerate into the slow, laboured copying of shapes in an endeavour to obtain accuracy of form.



IDEAS FOR HANDWRITING ACTIVITIES

- Children can be encouraged to copy the patterns found in natural objects such as shells, stones and leaves.
- Children can be motivated to design their own patterns.
- Jingles and nursery rhymes are one way of stimulating children to make their own patterns as they provide natural rhythms which assist children in developing smooth, rhythmical movements in writing, particularly in pattern-making exercises.
- Music and movement activities also provide opportunities to develop an awareness of rhythm.
- Hand-clapping games with a partner to develop co-ordination and rhythm.

Basic movements are those which make the vertical line, the horizontal line, and the oval. These are combined in a variety of ways to form symbols - our alphabet - which convey meaning.



Note: Exercises are best practised on blank paper to avoid restricted movements.

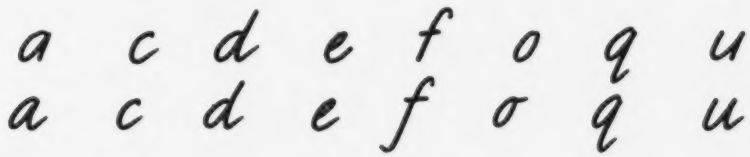
INTRODUCING THE LETTER AND NUMERAL FORMATIONS

Each formation is shown in detail on the following pages. Letter combinations and words for practising the formation are given as suggestions only.

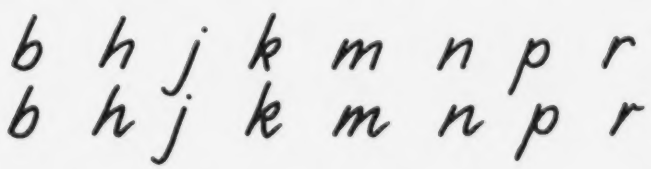
Lower case

Letters may be grouped for teaching purposes according to direction as follows:

Letters with anticlockwise emphasis:

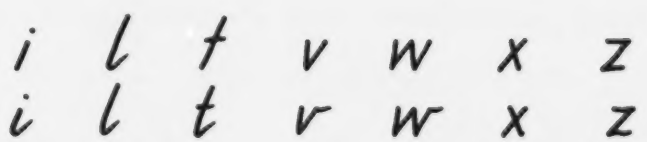


Letters with clockwise emphasis:



Letters incorporating both clockwise and anticlockwise movements:

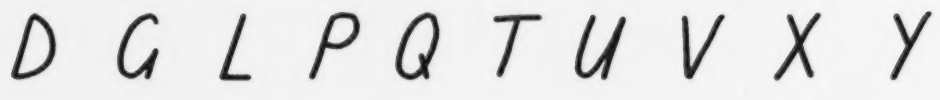
Linear movement:



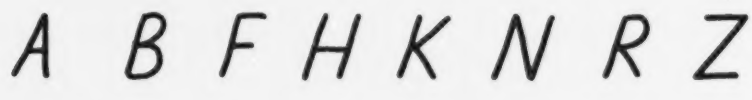
Capitals

One-stroke:

Two-stroke:

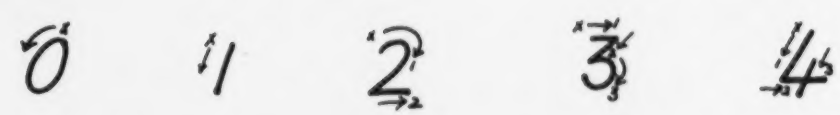


Three-stroke:

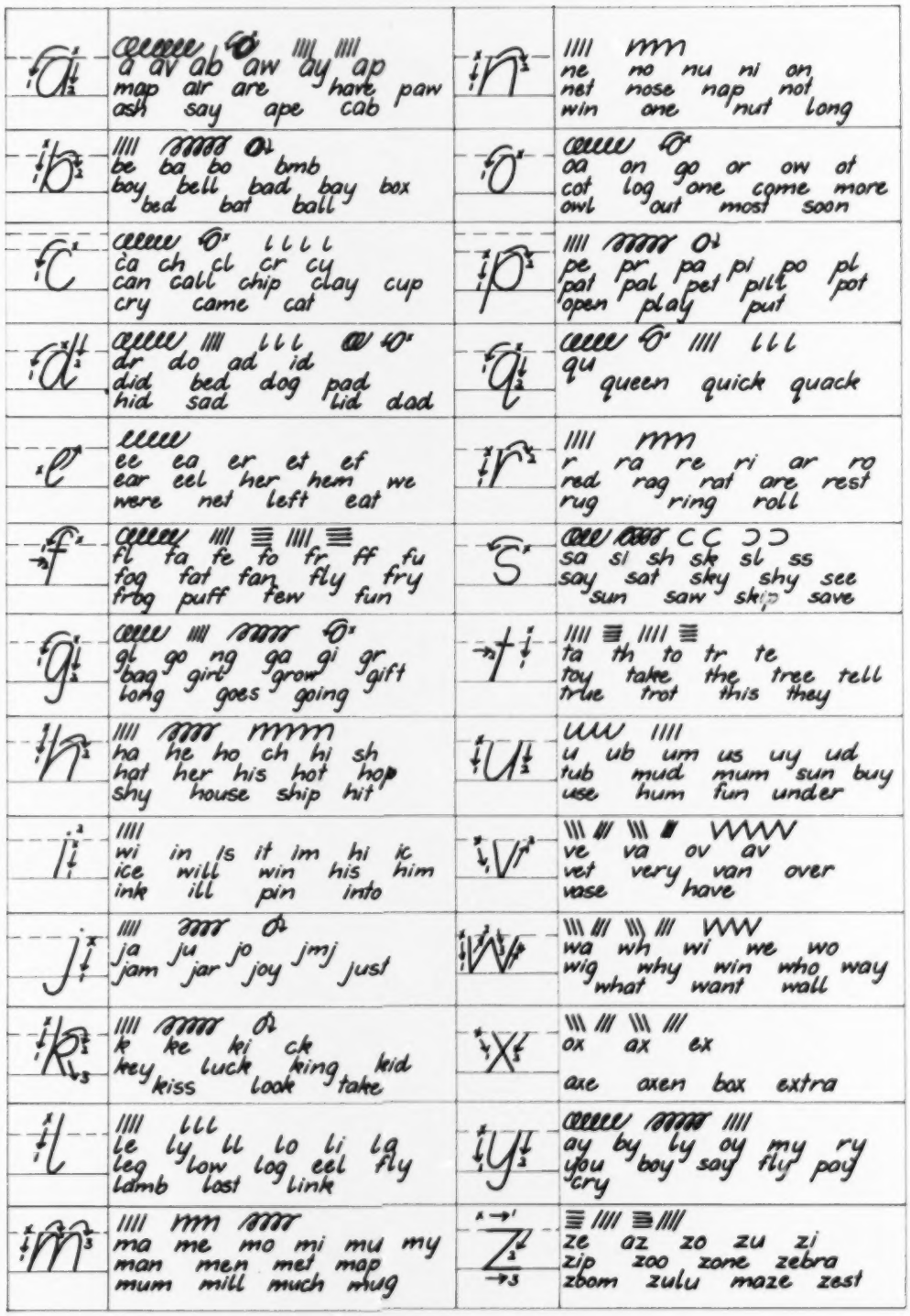


Four-stroke:

Numerals



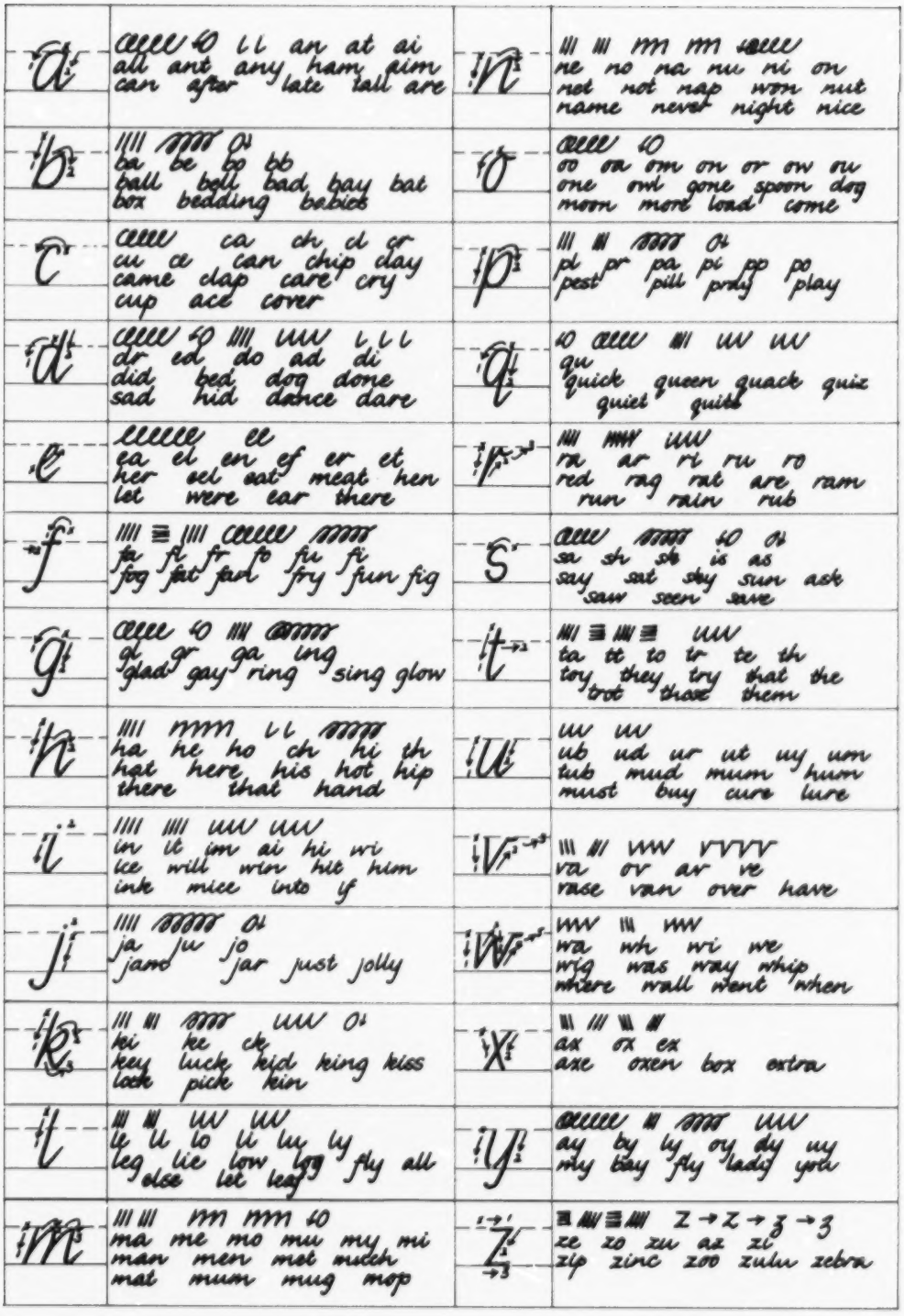
Beginners alphabet


a av ab aw ay ap
map air are hare paw
ash say ape cab
ne no nu ni on
net nose nap not
win one nut long
be ba bo bmb
boy bell bad bay box
bed bat ball
oa on go or ow ot
cot log one come more
owl out most soon
ca ch cl cr cy
can call chip clay cup
cry came cat
pe pr pa pi po pl
pat pal pet pill pot
open play put
dr do ad id
did bed dog pad
hid sad lid dad
qu
queen quick quack
ee ea er et ef
ear eel her hem we
were net left eat
r ra re ri ar ro
red rag rat are rest
rug ring roll
fl fa fe fo fr ff fu
fog fat fan fly fry
frog puff few fun
sa sl sh sk sl ss
say sat sky shy see
sun saw skip save
gl go ng ga gi gr
bag girl grow gift
long goes going
ta th to tr te
toy take the tree tell
true trot this they
ha he ho ch hi sh
hat her his hot hop
shy house ship hit
u ub um us uy ud
tub mud mum sun buy
use hum fun under
wi in is it im hi ic
ice will win his him
ink ill pin into
ve va ov av
vet very van over
vase have
ja ju jo jmj
jam jar joy just
wa wh wi we wo
wig why win who way
what want wall
k ke ki ck
key kiss luck king kid
look take
ox ax ex
axe axen box extra
le ly ll lo li la
leg low log eel fly
lamb last link
ay by ly oy my ry
you boy say fly pay
cry
ma me mo mi mu my
man men met map
mum mill much mug
ze az zo zu zi
zip zoo zone zebra
zbom zulu maze zest

Capital letters

Use children's names, place names.

Cursive alphabet



Letter connections

Some letters are not connected to the letters that follow and some combinations do not appear in our language.

Aa	aa ab ac ad ae af ag ah ai aj ak al am an ao ap aq ar as at au av aw ax ay az
Bb	does not join to following letters.
Cc	ca cb cc cd ce cf cg ch ci cj ck cl cm cn co cp cq cr cs ct cu cv cw cx cy cz
Dd	da db dc dd de df dg dh di dj dk dl dm dn do dp dq dr ds dt du dv dw dx dy dz
Ee	ea eb ec ed ee ef eg eh ei ej ek el em en eo ep eq er es et eu ev ew ex ey ez
Ff	fa fb fc fd fe ff fg fh fi fj fk fl fm fn fo fp fq fr fs ft fu fv fw fx fy fz
Gg	does not join to following letters
Hh	ha hb hc hd he hf hg hh hi hj hk hl hm hn ho hp hq hr hs ht hu hv hw hx hy hz
Ii	ia ib ic id ie if ig ih ii ij ik il im in io ip iq ir is it iu iv iw ix iy iz
Jj	does not join to following letters
Kk	ka kb kc kd ke kf kg kh ki kj kk kl km kn ko kp kq kr ks kt ku kv kw kx ky kz
Ll	la lb lc ld le lf lg lh li lj lk ll lm ln lo lp lq lr ls lt lu lv lw lx ly lz

Letter connections (continued)

Mm	ma mb mc md me mf mg mh mi mj mk ml mm mn mo mp mq mr ms mt mu mv mw mx my
Nn	na nb nc nd ne nf ng nh ni nj nk nl nm nn no np nq nr ns nt nu nv nw nx ny nz
Oo	oa ob oc od oe of og oh oi oj ok ol om on oo op oq or os ot ou ov ow ox oy oz
Pp	does not join to the following letter
Qq	does not join to the following letter
Rr	ra rb rc rd re rf rg rh ri rj rk rl rm rn ro rp rq rr rs rt ru rv rw rx ry rz
Ss	does not join to following letters
Tt	ta tb tc td te tf tg th ti tj tk tl tm tn to tp tq tr ts tt tu tv tw tx ty tz
Uu	ua ub uc ud ue uf ug uh ui uj uk ul um un uo up uq ur us ut uu uv uw ux uy uz
Vv	va vb vc vd ve vf vg vh vi vj vk vl vm vn vo vp vq vr vs vt vu vv vw vx vy vz
Ww	wa wb wc wd we wf wg wh wi wj wk wl wm wn wo wp wq wr ws wt wu wv ww wx wy wz
Xx Yy Zz	do not join to following letters

NOTES ON DEVELOPING THE BASIC STYLE

Letter shapes and joining lines

Children should understand the distinction and respective roles of letter shapes and joining strokes.

We do read the letter shapes. We don't read the joining lines.

It is not necessary to join all letters in words in order to produce fluent handwriting. *Not joining* some letters can in fact assist fluency.

Joining strokes should be given less prominence than the formation of letter shapes.

The essence of fluent handwriting is the rhythmic, fluent movement of the writing implement - *both above as well as on the page*.

When practising handwriting movements as well as letter shapes, it may be helpful to:

- *Start with large shapes and move to small ones*. The direction and sequence of the movement can be learned by holding the fingers and hand steady while the whole arm moves. Subsequently reduce the size of the movements, bringing into play the fine movements which the fingers produce.

- *Visualise*. Close your eyes and try to recall the movements involved in forming the patterns and in forming the letters.

The handwriting/writing process involves:

- *Recall*: remembering (not just copying the shaping movements of letters and letter clusters), thus producing automatic handwriting movements.

- *Rehearsal*: practising these movements, mentally and physically; talking about the handwriting. As the handwriter becomes proficient, this rehearsal becomes instantaneous and even unconscious.

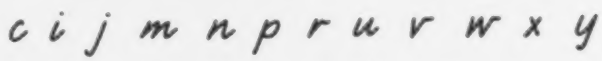
- *Production*: producing the marks on the page - often while paying attention only or mainly to the content and intent of the writing.

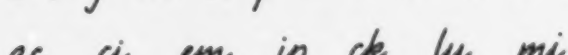
- *Verification*: examining what has been written to check that what had been intended to be put on the page has actually been done.

Writing letters together

These letters finish with a little up-stroke.

This upstroke joins easily to the beginning of.

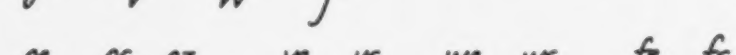




The cross-stroke of t and f are at the same height as the top of the small letters and f readily joins to the letter following.

Letters which end with an up-stroke *never* join to the top of the tall letters (ascenders):

Do not use the horizontal exit stroke to join to *tall* letters. However, the finishing stroke of o, v, w, and f joins to all *small* letters except e, s and z.



The letter r joins to all small letters except e, s and z.

These letters *never* join to the next letter in a word:

Ligatures (joining strokes)

Ligatures between letters are justified only if they increase the speed and rhythm of writing without detracting seriously from its legibility. If the first letter ends in a movement which passes easily and naturally into the movement which makes the next letter, then the ligature is usually justified.

Developing an individual style

The fundamental purpose of the basic style of handwriting is to assist students to develop individual, personal styles that are legible and fluent.

Children, like adults, inevitably develop a personal style of handwriting. This style will be influenced by the curriculum model, but will not simply be a reproduction of the model. The curriculum model is only a 'foundation'.

As children develop confidence in writing and handwriting, they will naturally begin to express their personal preferences for appearance and in doing so will make modifications to the basic letter shapes. As speed increases, sharp corners may be rounded (e.g. E → E), speed loops and other joining lines may appear (e.g. y → y) and changes in stroking direction may occur (e.g. D → D).

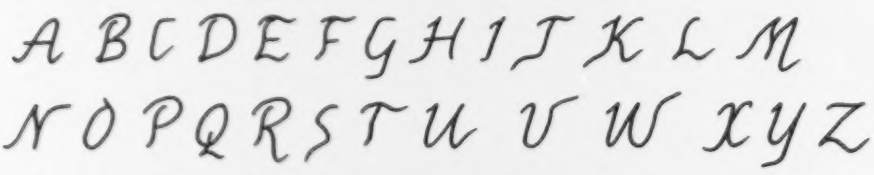
Children at this stage of handwriting development are chiefly influenced by:

- the purpose for which the handwriting is being used;
- the mental and physical conditions of the writer (which produce temporary variations as well as permanent ones).

Another strong influence, especially during adolescence, is the handwriting of relations or friends.

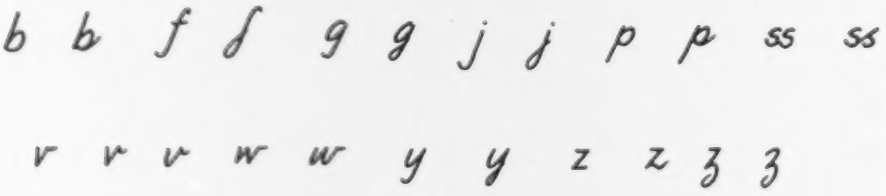
Children who do not have the ability or desire to elaborate the basic style should not be expected to do so.

Some modifications may appear at this stage:



Any such modifications should be accepted, provided that the fundamental requirements of legibility and fluency are preserved.

In the upper primary years *flourished capitals* can be taught as children develop skill and interest in different forms of handwriting.



BLANK PAPER — LINED PAPER

Research on the value of using blank or lined paper is inconclusive. However, blank surfaces, of sufficient size to be unrestricting, are probably best for beginners. Writing on blank paper allows the child to learn about the proportions within letters (e.g. the stroke of a d is twice the height of its oval portion) and the proportions between letters. It is important that children learn about these proportions before their movements are restricted within lines. When children have this knowledge of the proportions of letter shapes and a sense of alignment (e.g. the tail of the g hangs below an a) then the following sequence for introducing lines is suggested:

- Blank paper is recommended for practice at all stages.
- Writing between widely spaced lines. can
  (Follow the path from left to right, stay within the lines.)
- Writing on a line. gate
- Children may gradually move from writing between widely spaced lines to the more conventional 8 mm space. However each child's development will dictate the *most appropriate space* for his or her particular stage of development and for the purpose of the writing. Although some children may prefer lines, blank paper should be available at all stages of development.

WRITING IMPLEMENTS

At all stages of development, children should be given the opportunity to experiment with a variety of writing implements.

Some beginning writers may feel more comfortable with a thin pencil than with the more traditional thick type. It may be that the thinner pencil is more appropriate for small hands.

There should be no restrictions on writing implements and paper at any particular grade level.

Teachers need to provide a variety of pens and pencils, felt pens, and so on, to match the individual needs of children as they write under different circumstances.

The writing experience needs to be made as comfortable and *enjoyable* as possible with minimum restrictions.

Neither the teaching and learning of a subject nor the development of skill in handwriting should be allowed to suffer from the premature insistence on the use of a pen.

Children who have learned to write in pencil with ease and fluency will have no difficulty in mastering the use of *the pen of their choice.*

The carefully guided individual choice of a pen is necessary and children should be *taught to use it,* preferably in the upper primary years when a personal style is beginning to develop.

THE LEFT-HANDED WRITER

Research reveals that approximately 10 per cent of the population is left-handed. Left-handed children should be given special attention when learning handwriting skills.

The following suggestions may be helpful.

The truly left-handed child must be allowed to write with this hand.

The left-handed writer may experience difficulties unknown to the right-handed child. However, with careful instruction, the left-handed child should learn to write with considerable fluency.

Some problems which may be experienced are:

- Free writing movements may be restricted as the writing arm moves towards and across the body rather than moving away.

- What is being written is hidden and as the hand passes over the writing, smudging may occur. It is also difficult to write fluently when what is being written is partially covered.

- Writing from left to right is against the natural movement of the left-handed writer. The writing instrument must be pushed rather than pulled across the paper.

- Modelling by right-handed teachers is often confusing.

These suggestions may help to minimise difficulties:

- *Pencil hold.* The pencil should be held slightly farther from the point than is usual to enable the child to better see what is being written.

- *Paper position.* The paper should be placed slightly to the left of the writer and tilted to the right.

- *Slope.* A more upright slope may be more practical.

- *Body position.* The body may be turned slightly to the right to allow the left arm greater freedom of movement.

- *Lighting.* Hand and arm should not exclude light. Ideally, light should come from behind and over the right shoulder.

- *Seating.* The left-handed writer should be placed to the left of a right-handed writer to avoid restriction of arm movement.

3 Planning the program

The following statements from the language guidelines for primary teachers have implications for the teacher planning a handwriting program.

The stage of child's development.

Providing time for discussion with individual children.

Providing opportunities for increasing children's awareness of of the purpose of handwriting.

The development of 'handwriting vocabulary' appropriate to the child's stage of development, ascenders, descenders, exit strokes, lower case, upper case.

The program needs to be planned on the individual needs of the children.
In planning programs teachers should consider ...

Specific needs based on observation of the actual writing and and the finished product.

Flexible timetabling which allows for changing needs of the individual children.

Regular attention to technique: pencil-hold, seating position, paper position.

Providing the opportunity for supervised practice of specific weaknesses.

EVALUATION OF HANDWRITING

If we believe that by the end of the primary years most children should acquire a personal handwriting style which is swift, economical, fluent and legible, *then we need to*:

- plan carefully, and
- monitor individual progress carefully.

It is necessary to make regular checks of both speed and quality. It is also an essential part of the teacher's task to ensure that practice in writing is of the *right kind* and is adequately motivated. Children will make most progress when they are consciously striving to improve their performance in specific areas.

Evaluation of the development of handwriting should:

- be based on objectives which are clearly understood by the child;
- be a co-operative enterprise involving the child, the teacher and the parents;
- involve regular observation of children as they write and of their written work, to enable teachers to determine whether previously acquired skills need further development or if further skills and techniques are to be introduced;
- involve self-appraisal of progress in achieving defined objectives.

An understanding of the basic process of handwriting underlies the teaching of fast, legible handwriting. It is therefore essential that children understand these processes and are able to discuss their own work critically from the beginning stages. Handwriting is an expression of individuality and this should be encouraged *within the framework of legibility*.

Evaluation should be a two-fold process, using

- teachers' observation and
- pupils' self-evaluation

Teachers should have a system for monitoring progress and recording relevant information. This will help them to remedy faults before they become ingrained habits.

As the writer matures, an individual style will emerge. This does not mean that the child's handwriting should be allowed to deteriorate, rather that criteria other than strict adherence to the model should be evaluated. Such criteria would be:

- line quality (thick and thin strokes)
- fluency of movement
- ability to join
- simplification of strokes to increase speed
- balanced proportions in letters
- consistent slope

In summary, evaluation should assist:

- the child's development and the
- effectiveness of teaching practices.

Evaluation (Pre-writing stage)

	Directional Movements								
Names	Pen Hold	Pencil Control	Horizontal left to right	Vertical top to bottom	Diagonal top to bottom	Anti-clockwise	Clockwise	Spatial Awareness Ability to use lines	Comments

Evaluation (Writing stage)

Names	Formation of Lower Case Letters								Formation of upper case letters	Comments
	'a' Family a d g q (p b)		'o' Family o c e		'm n' 'r v w' Family m n r h k u y		i t l f j s x z			
	paper		paper		paper		paper			
	blank	lined	blank	lined	blank	lined	blank	lined		

Evaluation (Experienced writers)

Names	Technique	Parallelity - within words - within letters	Joining comprehension	Spacing - within words - between words	Letter formations	Size	Speed	Margins and arrangement	Flourished capitals	Comments

Individual Progress Record

Name	_____ Year _____										
	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Lower case letter formations											
Upper case letter formations											
Joins											
Spacing											
Slope											
Size of letters											
Proportion of letters											
Alignment											
Speed											
Setting out - headings											
- margins											
- general											

✓ = satisfactory progress * = needs attention

(or other selected symbols)

- An evaluation card 'Individual Progress Record', kept by the child with assistance from the teacher, may help the child to become more aware of factors affecting legibility of handwriting.
- It is suggested that each month a sample of handwriting be discussed and assessed by child and teacher in a conference situation.
- The reverse side of the card may record specific objectives for the child to concentrate upon i.e. exactly what needs to be practised.
- These cards may be kept as a continuous record of the child's handwriting development from year to year.
- Teachers could modify the cards to best suit the needs of children at particular stages of development.

4 Handwriting in the language arts program

A handwriting vocabulary for children could be introduced at appropriate stages. The vocabulary could include these words:

oval	formation	fluent
straight	patterns	cursive
begin	posture	diagonal
finish	pencil lift	spacing
join (ligature)	'dropped' letter	horizontal
exit strokes	lower case	flourish
lines	upper case	calligraphy
parallel	ascender	lettering
slope	descender	height
shape of letter	legible	width
	writing implement	

Teachers could add to this list.

HANDWRITING IN THE WRITING PROCESS

When children write for an audience they often develop an understanding of and a desire for skills which they see as necessary for the effective presentation of their ideas. This motivates them and places the development of skills in a meaningful context.

ENCOURAGING HIGH STANDARDS

The following activities direct attention to the need for handwriting of a high standard.

- writing letters, to pen friends, relatives
- addressing envelopes
- notes to parents
- invitations, e.g. birthday parties
- greeting cards for special occasions
- preparing labels and signs
- practising signatures and initials

- completing forms appropriate to age groups, banking, telegrams, excursion consent, enrolment, questionnaires,
- recording world facts (famous people, current events, countries, capital cities)
- publishing

verse and prose	recipes
abbreviations	menus
proverbs	words and phrases from other languages
similes	favourite book reviews
newspaper headlines	class records (like the Guinness Book of Records)
school or class newsletters	

Learning centres can be used when children wish to practise their technique and experiment with lettering.

A learning centre may involve the children in such activities as:

- production of labels, captions.
- experimentation with instruments and materials
- researching the history of handwriting
- recording proverbs, quotations, in other languages
- decorative titles and borders for books and assignments
- publishing poems or short pieces of prose
- production of books or class newspapers
- development of signatures
- making greeting cards
- writing letters

Materials provided at the learning centre should include:

- paper in a variety of sizes, colours and qualities, both lined and unlined
- a variety of pens, pencils, crayons, textas, brushes, inks, poster paints,
- a typewriter (if available)
- scissors, paste, pins, tape, rulers, glitter
- a variety of lettering books
- relevant reference books

5 Handwriting across the curriculum

Below are some suggestions which teachers may use when planning activities that would provide children with an understanding of the history of handwriting. Activities of this type may also increase children's interest in the printed and written word.

Collect 'old books'
. discuss and display
. inscriptions?

Trace history of handwriting from Babylonian and Egyptian times. Write in cuneiform.

Research oriental handwriting, learning some of the symbols and reproducing them.

Development of
. the printing press
. word processors.

Investigate the role of ancient scribes.

ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE HISTORY OF HANDWRITING

Produce scrolls, cave paintings, tablets.

Make a chart of Roman numerals with Arabic equivalents.

Handwriting of famous people.

Paper
. origins
. maybe make your own

Investigate the development of writing implements. Make your own quill. Organise a display where children can experiment with various implements.

Make a scrap book about handwriting. Collect examples of various styles from magazines and newspapers.

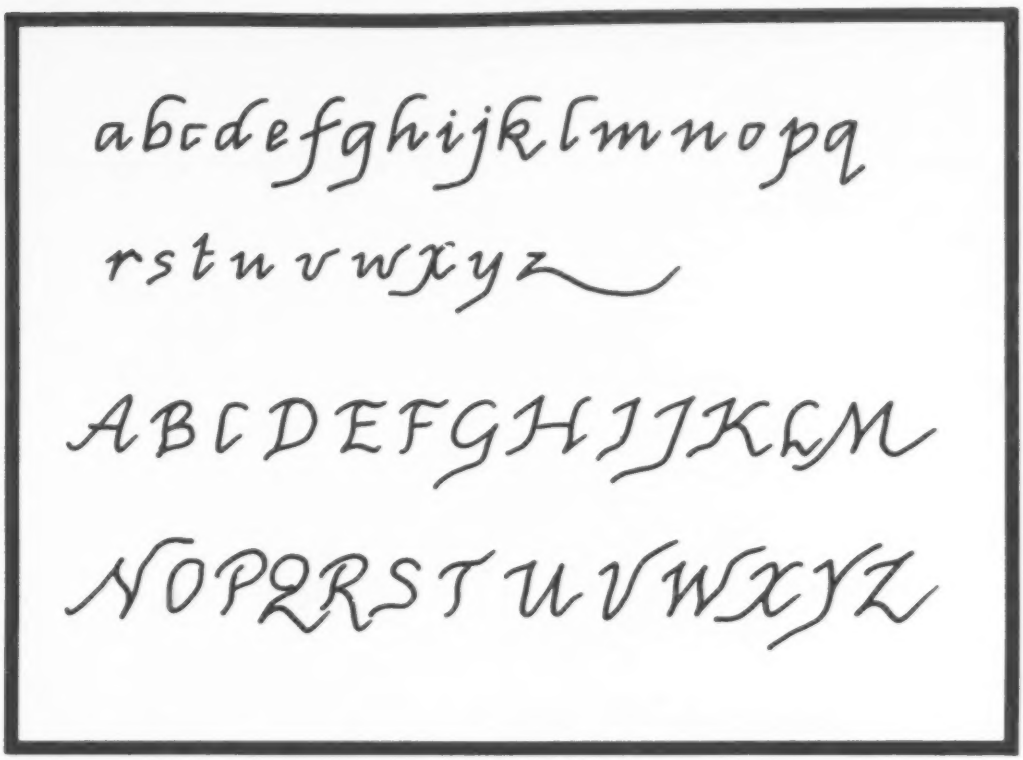
Investigate the development of various styles throughout history. Many examples can be found in history, art and lettering books.

Lettering/styles used in advertising
. collect and display samples.

INTRODUCING CALLIGRAPHY

The art of calligraphy could be introduced in the upper primary years to interested children who wish to pursue this study.

The italic style is recommended because its letter shapes are similar to those of the basic handwriting style.



Recommended for teachers introducing calligraphy skills to upper primary children:

Biggs, John R., *Lettercraft*, Blandford Press, New York, 1983.

Fairbank, Alfred, *A Handwriting Manual*, Faber and Faber, 1978.

George, Ross F., *Speedball Textbooks*, Hunt Manufacturing Company, USA, 1972.

Gourdie, Tom, *Calligraphic Styles*, Cassell, London, 1980.

Shepherd, Margaret, *Borders for Calligraphy*, Collier Books, 1980.

Glossary

When it is appropriate, children should become familiar with the 'language of handwriting' (technical terms).

ascender. That part of a letter which rises above the 'body' line.

calligraphy. Beautiful handwriting (from Greek 'kallos', meaning beauty).

cursive. Running (joined) writing.

descender. The part of a letter which lies below the base line.

'dropped' letters. Letters within a word which have a pen lift before them but give the appearance of continuous writing.

exit stroke. That part of a letter which leads to the following letter.

formation of letter. The starting point, shape and finishing point of a letter formed by correct movement (direction).

fluency. Smooth, easy flowing action in writing, expressing oneself easily and quickly.

horizontal join. Join from the top of the body of one letter to the top of the body of another.

legible. Clear, capable of being read easily.

ligature. Joining stroke. That part of a letter which joins to the succeeding or preceding letter.

parallelity. The ability to make parallel strokes within a word.

pencil lift. The pencil is lifted from the paper and the support position of the hand is moved along. Pencil lifts may occur within words.

printing. A style of writing using letters with no entry or exit strokes.

quick directional change. To avoid excessive angularity, or excessive roundness, correct.

rotation. The clockwise and anticlockwise finger movements within letters.

script. Handwriting; written characters.

spatial awareness. The ability to place letters between or on lines correctly.

support point. The point at which the writing hand rests on the page.

technique. Refers to (1) sitting position, (2) pen/pencil hold and (3) hand and arm movements used with the writing instrument.

wedge. The space left between the upstroke and downstroke.

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